

commitment which has led me to write to you. While I have been a consistent supporter of the war effort in both Afghanistan and Iraq, I believe that with this support comes a responsibility. This was true during a Republican administration in the midst of the wars, and it remains true today.

In 2005, I returned from my third trip to Iraq where I saw firsthand the deteriorating security situation. I was deeply concerned that Congress was failing to exercise the necessary oversight of the war effort. Against this backdrop I authored the legislation that created the Iraq Study Group (ISG). The ISG was a 10-member bipartisan group of well-respected, nationally known figures who were brought together with the help of four reputable organizations—the U.S. Institute for Peace, the Center for the Study of the Presidency, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and the Baker Institute for Public Policy at Rice University—and charged with undertaking a comprehensive review of U.S. efforts there. This panel was intended to serve as “fresh eyes on the target”—the target being success in Iraq.

While reticent at first, to their credit President Bush, State Secretary Rice and Defense Secretary Rumsfeld came to support the ISG, ably led by bipartisan co-chairs, former Secretary of State James Baker and former Congressman Lee Hamilton. Two members of your national security team, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and CIA Director Leon Panetta, saw the merit of the ISG and, in fact, served on the panel. Vice President Biden, too, then serving in the Senate, was supportive and saw it as a means to unite the Congress at a critical time. A number of the ISG's recommendations and ideas were adopted. Retired General Jack Keane, senior military adviser to the ISG, was a lead proponent of “the surge,” and the ISG referenced the possibility on page 73. Aside from the specific policy recommendations of the panel, the ISG helped force a moment of truth in our national conversation about the war effort.

I believe our nation is again facing such a moment in the Afghanistan war effort, and that a similar model is needed. In recent days I have spoken with a number of knowledgeable individuals including former senior diplomats, public policy experts and retired and active military. Many believe our Afghanistan policy is adrift, and all agreed that there is an urgent need for what I call an Afghanistan-Pakistan Study Group (APG). We must examine our efforts in the region holistically, given Pakistan's strategic significance to our efforts in Afghanistan and the Taliban's presence in that country as well, especially in the border areas.

This likely will not come as a surprise to you as commander in chief. You are well acquainted with the sobering statistics of the past several weeks—notably that July surpassed June as the deadliest month for U.S. troops. There is a palpable shift in the nation's mood and in the halls of Congress. A July 2010 CBS news poll found that 62 percent of Americans say the war is going badly in Afghanistan, up from 49 percent in May. Further, last week, 102 Democrats voted against the war spending bill, which is 70 more than last year, and they were joined by 12 members of my own party. Senator Lindsay Graham, speaking last Sunday on CNN's “State of the Union,” candidly expressed concern about an “unholy alliance” emerging of anti-war Democrats and Republicans.

I have heard it said that Vietnam was not lost in Saigon; rather, it was lost in Washington. While the Vietnam and Afghanistan parallels are imperfect at best, the shadow of history looms large. Eroding political will has consequences—and in the case of Afghanistan, the stakes could not be higher. A year

ago, speaking before the Veterans of Foreign Wars National Convention, you rightly said, “Those who attacked America on 9/11 are plotting to do so again. If left unchecked, the Taliban insurgency will mean an even larger safe haven from which al Qaeda would plot to kill more Americans. So this is not only a war worth fighting . . . this is fundamental to the defense of our people.” Indeed it is fundamental. We must soberly consider the implication of failure in Afghanistan. Those that we know for certain are chilling—namely an emboldened al Qaeda, a reconstituted Taliban with an open staging ground for future worldwide attacks, and a destabilized, nuclear-armed Pakistan.

Given these realities and wavering public and political support, I urge you to act immediately, through executive order, to convene an Afghanistan-Pakistan Study Group modeled after the Iraq Study Group. The participation of nationally known and respected individuals is of paramount importance. Among the names that surfaced in my discussions with others, all of whom more than meet the criteria described above, are ISO co-chairs Baker and Hamilton; former Senators Chuck Robb, Bob Kerrey and Sam Nunn; former Congressman Duncan Hunter; former U.S. ambassador Ryan Crocker, former Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger, and General Keane. These names are simply suggestions among a cadre of capable men and women, as evidenced by the makeup of the ISG, who would be more than up to the task.

I firmly believe that an Afghanistan-Pakistan Study Group could reinvigorate national confidence in how America can be successful and move toward a shared mission in Afghanistan. This is a crucial task. On the Sunday morning news shows this past weekend, it was unsettling to hear conflicting statements from within the leadership of the administration that revealed a lack of clarity about the endgame in Afghanistan. How much more so is this true for the rest of the country? An APSG is necessary for precisely that reason. We are nine years into our nation's longest running war and the American people and their elected representatives do not have a clear sense of what we are aiming to achieve, why it is necessary and how far we are from attaining that goal. Further, an APSG could strengthen many of our NATO allies in Afghanistan who are also facing dwindling public support, as evidenced by the recent Dutch troop withdrawal, and would give them a tangible vision to which to commit.

Just as was true at the time of the Iraq Study Group, I believe that Americans of all political viewpoints, liberals and conservatives alike, and varied opinions on the war will embrace this “fresh eyes” approach. Like the previous administration's support of the Iraq Study Group, which involved taking the group's members to Iraq and providing high-level access to policy and decision makers, I urge you to embrace an Afghanistan-Pakistan Study Group. It is always in our national interest to openly assess the challenges before us and to chart a clear course to success.

As you know, the full Congress comes back in session in mid-September—days after Americans around the country will once again pause and remember that horrific morning nine years ago when passenger airlines became weapons, when the skyline of one of America's greatest cities was forever changed, when a symbol of America's military might was left with a gaping hole. The experts with whom I have spoken in recent days believe that time is of the essence in moving forward with a study panel, and waiting for Congress to reconvene is too long to wait. As such, I am hopeful you will use

an executive order and the power of the bully pulpit to convene this group in short order, and explain to the American people why it is both necessary and timely. Should you choose not to take this path, respectfully, I intend to offer an amendment by whatever vehicle necessary to mandate the group's creation at the earliest possible opportunity.

The ISO's report opened with a letter from the co-chairs that read, “There is no magic formula to solve the problems of Iraq. However, there are actions that can be taken to improve the situation and protect American interests.” The same can be said of Afghanistan.

I understand that you are a great admirer of Abraham Lincoln. He too, governed during a time of war, albeit a war that pitted brother against brother, and father against son. In the midst of that epic struggle, he relied on a cabinet with strong, oftentimes opposing viewpoints. Historians assert this served to develop his thinking on complex matters. Similarly, while total agreement may not emerge from a study group for Afghanistan and Pakistan, I believe that vigorous, thoughtful and principled debate and discussion among some of our nation's greatest minds on these matters will only serve the national interest. The biblical admonition that iron sharpens iron rings true.

Best wishes.

P.S. We as a nation must be successful in Afghanistan. We owe this to our men and women in the military serving in harm's way and to the American people.

100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA (TAIWAN)

HON. MIKE QUIGLEY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 21, 2011

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, on October 10, the Republic of China (Taiwan), will celebrate its 100th anniversary as a nation.

One hundred years ago, on October 10, 1911, Dr. Sun Yat-Sen and his Revolutionary Alliance ended China's rule of Taiwan.

Since then, Taiwan has proven itself a beacon of democracy and freedom for the global community.

Taiwanese leaders have consistently and peacefully transferred power amongst each other, and its residents act in ways that embody democratic philosophies and principles.

I am proud to call Taiwan a friend and ally, and I hope that my colleagues will join me in recognizing the Taiwanese people and their century of accomplishments.

As a friend, I happily extend my congratulations to Taiwan on its upcoming 100th anniversary.

COMMENDING THE SERVICE OF JUDGE LACY THORNBURG TO WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

HON. HEATH SHULER

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 21, 2011

Mr. SHULER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Judge Lacy Thornburg for more than fifty-five years of public service to our country and Western North Carolina.

Judge Lacy Thornburg was born in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina in 1929. After

graduating from Huntersville High School, he served in the U.S. Army, graduated from Mars Hill College and received his law degree from The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Following his law school graduation in 1954, Judge Thornburg and his wife moved to Jackson County, North Carolina where he began a law practice with former Congressman David Hall. He became active in church, civic, and political affairs, holding offices in the Presbyterian Church, the Jaycees, the Lions, and the Young Democrats.

During Judge Thornburg's thirteen years as a practicing trial lawyer, he was elected to three terms in the North Carolina General Assembly. He was appointed as a Superior Court Judge in 1966 and served on the bench for sixteen years. Through his hard work and respect for others, Judge Thornburg was elected Attorney General of North Carolina in November of 1984 and served two four-year terms. As Attorney General, he personally argued three cases before the United States Supreme Court: *Riley v. National Federal of the Blind* in 1988, *N.C. Department of Transportation v. Crest St. Council* in 1986, and *Thornburg v. Gingles* in 1986.

In 1994, President Bill Clinton nominated Judge Thornburg as U.S. District Judge for the Western District of North Carolina and he was confirmed by the 104th Congress on January 11, 1995. He served with distinction on the federal bench until his retirement in 2009.

It is an honor to represent selfless, hard-working public servants like Judge Lacy Thornburg. His devotion to public service is a great source of pride to me and to Western North Carolina. I ask my colleagues to join me today in recognizing Judge Lacy Thornburg for his lasting impact on Western North Carolina.

IN CELEBRATION OF FLORENCE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

HON. RICHARD E. NEAL

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 21, 2011

Mr. NEAL. Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the work of the Florence Congregational Church located in Florence, Massachusetts. It was originally a community church named "The Church of Christ In Florence." Its founders visualized it as the center of the abolitionist movement in the village, which was already an active station on the underground railroad, with its charter members being sympathetic to the movement. Its first settled pastor, Horace Carter Hovey, had been driven from his pulpit in Indiana because of his ardent opposition to slavery. Article nine of the church's bylaws, adopted on June 3, 1862, declared "our decided protest against the sin of slavery."

The church was dedicated on October 9, 1861, in the sixth month of the Civil War. The Reverend Hovey twice took a leave of absence to volunteer with the United States Christian Commission, serving troops on battlefields in Virginia. Meanwhile, members of the infant church sewed clothing for the soldiers and sent them "comfort bags" and food to supplement army rations.

During the 150 years that followed, fifteen successive pastors have served this faith com-

munity in Florence. The original twenty-six members increased to a peak of over 900 in the 1960s; subsequently membership settled at its current level of about 200.

The church has continued to function as a center of community life. Today it shares its facilities with the Cloverdale Cooperative Nursery School and Beit Ahavah, a reformed Jewish congregation. It hosts an AA chapter, regular public suppers, a Boy Scout troop, and a summer vacation bible school that draws children from the surrounding area. The present pastor, the Reverend Irvn A. Gammon, is deeply committed to his work with the Cancer Connection and to the community.

SUPPORT OF THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA (TAIWAN)

HON. LAURA RICHARDSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 21, 2011

Ms. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Republic of China, also known as Taiwan, which will occur on October 10, 2011.

On October 10, 1911, revolutionaries led by Dr. Sun Yat-sen launched an uprising in Taiwan to overturn dynastic rule that prevailed in China for over two thousand years. The Provisional Government of the Republic of China was established, declaring the Republic of China (ROC) an independent and sovereign state and the first republic in Asia. Dr. Sun Yat-sen served as their first president. October 10th is now celebrated annually as ROC's national day, also known as "Double Ten Day."

In honor of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Republic of China, we remember and celebrate the struggles the Republic of China faced in order to become a democratic republic state. We also acknowledge Dr. Sun Yat-sen's dedication to the principles of nationalism, democracy and the people's livelihood. Since its founding nearly a century ago, the Republic of China has undergone tremendous transformations and has matured into a free-market, multi-party democracy that plays key roles in the global economy and in maintaining regional peace and stability.

As a proud member of the Congressional Taiwan Caucus, I have had the privilege to travel to Taiwan this past May as part of a bipartisan delegation. I had the pleasure of meeting President Ma Ying-jeou and other government officials. I was strongly encouraged by their commitment to maintaining strong ties with the United States.

As we celebrate Taiwan's progress and development during the past century, we must also applaud their commitment to the ideals of freedom and democracy. I would like to congratulate the people of Taiwan for continuing in the traditions of Sun Yat-sen and maintaining the vibrant democracy that is a model for the entire world.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in honoring the Republic of China on the 100th anniversary of its founding.

RECOGNIZING JOHN D. WAGNER ON HIS RETIREMENT FROM THE TRI-COUNTY REGIONAL LABOR COUNCIL, AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR—CONGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS

HON. BETTY SUTTON

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 21, 2011

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge an individual who has tirelessly advocated on behalf of working families in my Congressional District.

John D. Wagner is a tenacious leader and has been a voice for workers in a career that spans several decades. As Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the Tri-County Regional Labor Council, John has worked to improve the lives of workers and promote the beliefs of organized labor so that working class families can have a fair shake. A member in good standing with the United Association of Plumbers & Pipefitters Local Union #219, John served as the Business Manager and administered the business operations and always worked towards for best interests of its membership.

John has never ceased in his efforts to address the issues and reality of working Americans. He is a political force who does not waver in his belief that each and every American deserves decent, affordable health care and a secure retirement after a lifetime of hard work. His voice and actions have inspired many, and we are grateful for his willingness to stand up for good wages and benefits for the middle class.

Though he is retiring from the Tri-County Regional Labor Council, John will continue his service on the Barberton City Council, where he is highly regarded for his responsiveness to the concerns of the residents in Ward Three. I commend John on his service and I look forward to working with him to improve the quality of life for working families across Ohio.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing the dedicated service of Mr. John D. Wagner as he retires from the Tri-County Regional Labor Council, American Federation of Labor—Congress of Industrial Organizations.

HONORING THE FRIENDS OF THE FRELINGHUYSEN ARBORETUM

HON. RODNEY P. FRELINGHUYSEN

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 21, 2011

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor The Friends of the Frelinghuysen Arboretum, located in Morris County, New Jersey, as they celebrate their 40th anniversary.

Originally a working farm and personal summer house, bequeathed to the citizens of Morris County, the property is now the Frelinghuysen Arboretum, dedicated in 1971.

In 1972, The Friends of the Frelinghuysen Arboretum was founded in an effort to support the projects of the arboretum. With the help of funding provided by the Friends, through events like their annual plant sale, the Arboretum is able to provide educational and interactive programs to people of all ages. One